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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of a fifth-year teacher preparation program that included a year-long internship as preparation for the first full year of full-time teaching. Subjects for the study were nine first-year teachers who had completed the year-long internship as part of their certification program and were subsequently employed as teachers by the school system in which they had served as interns. For comparison purposes, two of three student teachers who completed certification requirements at the same time as the interns, trained at the same university, and were employed in the same schools as the interns were included in the study. The interns will provide insights into the relationship between the internship program and the following year of teaching. Their principals were included in the study to form comparisons between the performance of the interns and that of student teachers whom they had supervised as first-year teachers. Data were collected through interviews and observations. Final analyses that will yield a composite of the study were in the process of being completed. (JD)

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The Effect of a Year-Long Internship on First-Year Teaching Performance:

Studying the Effectivemess of the Internship

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The Effect of a Year-Long Internship on First-Year Teaching Performance: Studying the Effectiveness of the Internship

Introduction

During the latter part of the past decade, the United States has been involved in educational reforms directed toward the preparation of teachers. These reforms have been prompted by external criticism (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986) and changes in accreditation procedures by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. One recommended direction for change has been extending student teaching into a year-long school internship (Andrew, 1990; Darling-Hammond, Gendler, & Wise, 1990; Huling-Austin, 1988). The value of "supervised practice, consisting of short- and long-term internships" has also been recommended for preparing prospective school principals (National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, 1987, p. 18).

Internship programs have been positively perceived by participants in both teacher preparation (Schwab, 1989) and principal preparation (Fowler & Gettys, 1989) programs. Because of the variation in the internship programs, it is necessary to understand the specific internship program before giving weight to the research findings. The purpose of the current study was to examine the effectiveness of a fifth-year teacher preparation program that included a year-long postbaccalaureate internship as preparation for the first year of full-time teaching.

Review of Literature

Internship programs in teacher education are relatively new. Little research to examine the effects of the teaching internship at the end of the program has been conducted, and even less is known about its effectiveness as preparation for the first year of full-time teaching after program completion.

Teaching anxiety levels were reduced significantly for students who participated in year-long internships during the undergraduate program but not for students who completed only traditional student teaching (Silvernail & Costello, 1983). Prospective teachers completing traditional programs have, however, been rated higher than alternative program participants at the conclusion of the internship (Soares, 1990) and in the first year of teaching (Hawk & Schmidt, 1989).

Graduates of postbaccalaureate or five-year teacher preparation programs including a year-long internship have been found to enter the profession after program completion at higher rates than graduates of traditional programs (Andrew, 1990; Boser & Wiley, 1988; Corcoran & Andrew, 1988). Long-range studies have shown that the percentage of individuals teaching several years after program completion or intending to return to teaching was also higher for participants in five-year programs than for traditional program graduates (Andrew, 1990). Individuals completing other types of graduate level programs, such as the M.A.T., tended to have more teaching experience than graduates of B;S. or B.A. degree programs (Matthes & Duffy, 1989).

While students completing internship programs may be characterized by greater commitment to the profession and higher likelihood of entering teaching, the internship year is not without cost. Some sources of stress for interns in postbaccalaureate teacher preparation programs have been identified: economic hardship because they are paying tuition during the additional year before becoming employed, lack of agreement between interns and their supervisors on the level of competence needed by beginning teachers, and lack of role clarity for both interns and their cooperating teachers (Corcoran, 1989). There is difficulty in generalizing these results, however, because the nature of the preparation program and the internship influence the experiences of the participants.

The Internship Program

The internship program under study is a fifth-year, postbaccalaureate program that included a year-long public school internship after completion of a Liberal Arts

degree and education coursework in the summer. The student was assigned to a public school for the school year. During fall semester, the intern was in the school for half of the day, involved in teaching-related activities that escalated to assuming responsibility for instruction for three classes by mid- to late fall. In addition, interns were enrolled in from one to three courses at the university. During the spring semester, interns had full responsibility for teaching three classes and were involved in teaching-related activities during the rest of the full day spent at the school. They were expected to take only one university course during the spring semester; but, because the university was in the last year under the quarter credit-hour system, some students took two classes to facilitate program completion before the change to semesters became effective. Courses were late afternoon or evening classes, rather than during the school day.

When entering the teacher preparation program, the prospective teachers (as well as College of Education faculty members) anticipated that financial support would be provided for the interns by the State Department of Education. Funds were not appropriated by the state, however each intern received a $1,000 scholarship from the College of Education to defray expenses.

The first cohort of interns completed their internships during the 1988-89 school year. Although the program was evaluated while the students matriculated, it was considered important to follow them into the field and re-examine their preparation program at the conclusion of their first year of teaching. This presentation is based on that follow-up evaluation.

Subjects

Subjects for the overall study were all first-year teachers who completed teacher certification programs at the University of Tennessee Knoxville during the 1988-89 academic year. Nine individuals were selected because they were the first persons to complete the year-long internship as part of their certification program and subsequently be employed as teachers by the same school system. The principal in each of the five

secondary schools and the one elementary school in which the interns were employed also participated in the study. For comparison purposes, individuals who had completed semester-length student-teaching were also sought. Control was exercised through selecting only student teachers who completed certification requirements at the same time as the interns, received their training from the same university, and were employed in the same schools as the interns. Three former student teachers who fit the criteria were identified, but only two agreed to participate in the study.

Three of the former interns were females, six were males. Both of the former student teachers were females. One of the interns was certified to teach elementary grades, while the other eight interns and the student teachers taught at the secondary level. Ages of the interns ranged from 23 to 56 years, with a mean of 32.2 years and a median of 28 years. Ages of the student teachers were 23 and 25. All of the interns and the older student teacher had been employed in other occupations prior to entering the teacher preparation program. The younger student teacher had worked on a part-time basis in sales for five years during her college years.

Eight of the nine interns and both student teachers taught in secondary schools; the remaining intern taught in an elementary school. Three of the interns (two females and one male) were employed at the same school, the one in which they had served their internship the previous year. The school served a middle- to upper-middle class population with a large percentage of college-bound students. A fourth intern (male) was employed in the same inner-city school in which his internship was completed.

The five interns who were not teaching in their internship schools had no previous experience in the schools in which they were employed, while two of the three student teachers had completed student teaching in the schools that employed them. Two male interns were at the same inner-city school. One had interned in a suburban school, the other in an urban school with a socioeconomic and ethnic composition somewhat (but not

drastically) different from the school in which he taught. The former student teacher in that school had no previous experience there.

The remaining three interns (two males and the female elementary school teacher) were at separate schools. The males had interned in a suburban school before being employed as teachers, one in another suburban-rural school and the other in an urban school. The first intern actually began work a week after school started, and the latter taught the first semester at one high school on an interim basis before being hired by the urban school at which he completed the year. Each of these two schools also employed a student teacher who had completed student teaching in that school. The last intern, a female, had interned in an inner-city elementary school before being employed in an urban school with a population that was similar but perhaps slightly higher socioeconomically.

Procedures

The relatively small number of interns completing the first year of the internship program allowed qualitative procedures to be used to gather data to explore more deeply the perceptions of the participants and the principals of the schools in which they taught as first-year teachers. Collection of data through more than one method and from more than one source permitted researchers to triangulate the findings, thus providing support for tentative conclusions or disproving them. Qualitative methods were particularly appropriate because this was an exploratory study and the researchers wanted to remain open to discovery of unplanned outcomes (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The internship program is still considered to be an innovative system in which the relevant variables have not yet been determined. There is a need to look at what works or does not work, and why. Interns were located at six sites. Each site tended to have some uniqueness that demanded recognition, so a multiple case study approach was utilized.

Elite interviewing (Dexter, 1970) appeared suitable for this study because the interns and their principals were targeted for participation in the research. (In elite

interviewing, those with the knowledge to provide the information are selected.) Both groups had first-hand knowledge of the performance of the interns during the year following the internship and would be able to offer their perceptions of the preparation provided by the program. The interns would also be able to provide insights into the relationship between the internship program and the following year of teaching, while the principals could form comparisons between the performance of the interns and that of student teachers whom they had supervised as first-year teachers.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the interns/student teachers and their principals, and two class-length observations of each of the first-year teachers who permitted observations. Interviews with the principals were conducted by two faculty members who helped design the study and knew which of the participants were interns and which were student teachers. Three doctoral students observed the classes of the teachers (when it was permitted by the teachers), and subsequently interviewed the teachers. The doctoral students were not told in advance which teachers were interns and which were student teachers. To reduce or eliminate bias on the part of the interviewers, they completed the classroom observations before interviewing the teachers because interview responses might identify the teachers as either interns or student teachers.

While all of the interns agreed to be interviewed, many did not wish to be observed that late in the school year. The student teachers were also reluctant to be observed, although two were interviewed. All interviews and classroom observations were tape-recorded and later transcribed, as were researchers' notes taken during interviews and observations. All interviews and observations took place during April and May of 1990 at the conclusion of the first year of full-time teaching.

Organization of the Results

Final analyses that will yield a composite off the study have not yet been completed. Upon closer examination of the various data sources, it became apparent that some results may be seriously influenced by context variables. These smaller subgroups, then form the basis for the following papers.

First, there are three interns who are teaching in schools other than ones in which they had interned. In two of those schools, there was a student teacher who had previous experience in the school, allowing for some comparison of the influence of the extended clinical experience (year-long internship in another school) with that of more limited previous experience in the school in which the teacher worked.

In another situation, three former interns were all hired to teach in one school, the same one in which they had all completed their internship. This case study focused on the influence of the influence of the internship as preparation for teaching when the intern was hired and continued in the internship school.

In yet another situation, two interns and a student teacher were hired to teach in an inner city school in which none of them had previous experience. The question with this particular subgroup was whether internship or student teaching offered a better preparation when both had been conducted in another school.

Principals' interviews focused on the interns currently in their employ and the preparation provided by the internship. There was also an attempt to elicit the principals' judgments comparing the internship program with the traditional program including student teaching, based on their present or previous experience with student teachers from the same institution.

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Appendix

Interview Guides

Principal Interview Guide

Name _____

School _____

Name of 1st year teacher _____

*These questions are to be asked if the principal has a 1st year teacher that completing an internship as part of the five year program.

*1. If you have an intern, did you have a choice in having an intern?

*2. Was the internship clearly explained to you? Were you advised of your responsibilities in having an intern?

3. Has _____ had other teaching experiences in your school prior to this year?

4. How well do you feel _____ has been prepared for his/her first year in the classroom?

*5. How well prepared are 1st year teachers who complete student teaching as part of their teacher preparation?

6. How does _____'s preparation compare with other beginning teachers? Teachers who have completed student teaching?

*7. What are the strengths of the 5th year program for preparing teachers?

*8. What are the weakness of the 5th year program for preparing teachers?

9. What is your perception of _____'s relationship with: Students? Other teachers? Office staff? Parents? You?

10. What is your perception of _____'s problems: at the beginning of the school year? Throughout the year? Now?

11. Has any one called your attention to a particular problem (or problems) with _____?

If yes, was the person a parent? Faculty member? Staff member? Studen

What was the nature of the problem?

12. Has anyone given a compliment(s) about _____?

If yes, was the person a parent? Faculty member? Staff member? Student?

What was the nature of the compliment(s)?

*13. Given the choice, from which preparation program would you prefer to hire 1st year teachers?

14. Anything else you would like to tell me about his/her preparation program?

Teacher Interview Guide

Subject: _____ Subjects Taught: _____
School: _____ Age: _____
Highest degree earned: _____ Number and ages of children: _____

1. What is it like to be a beginning teacher?

2. Describe a typical day as a teacher of _____ school.

3. In what ways do you think your coursework helped prepare you to be a teacher?

4. In what ways do you think your internship/student teaching prepared you for teaching?

5. Which helped you the most? Coursework? Internship/student teaching? Why?

6. How much time did you spend in classrooms prior to student teaching? How much would you recommend?

7. What major problems have you encountered this year - at the beginning of school throughout the year now?

8. How would you characterize any challenges with — students? Other teachers? Principal? Office staff? Parents?

9. Did you have other teaching experiences at this school?

10. During your internship/student teaching did you work part-time? How many hours per week?

11. During your internship/student teaching, did you take courses or attend seminars? Did they enhance or detract from your internship/student teaching?

12. During your internship/student teaching did you (1) participate in extra-curricular activities? If so, which ones?

13. If you were giving advice to a person who was about to become a teacher, what would you tell them?

14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your preparation program? 1st year?

15. Have you completed the Teacher Education 1988-89 Follow-up Survey? (if not, have the subject complete one)